

Kicking Off the Eating Season



As the holidays arrive so do holiday parties, food, gift baskets, and goodies. It can all add up to thousands of extra calories. Preparation and awareness are your best weapons for this challenging season. Consider the following rules to arrive in 2006 no worse for the wear: 1) Decide you won't feel guilty for saying "no thank you" to office holiday treats. 2) Consider settling for keeping your weight the same rather than losing weight during the holidays. 3) Are buffet tables in store for the holidays? Eat a filling, but nutritious snack beforehand to help curb your hunger. 4) Holiday foods can be exciting, but don't make them a recreational sport. 5) Team up with a friend to help reinforce your commitment to reduce over-eating during the season.

EMPLOYEES ASK ABOUT THE EAP

EA Professionals Not Judgmental



Q I want to be open, but am worried about what the Employee Assistance (EA) professional might think of me or record in his or her notes during my session. I know the EAP is confidential, but I am still concerned. Should I be?

A EA professionals obtain only the information necessary for optimal EAP service to the client. References and information that have no direct relevance to the issue of concern is avoided. EA professionals recognize the value and uniqueness of all persons. Therefore, being "judged" or criticized is not part of the EAP assessment process. This has been the foundation of EAP confidentiality for many years.

Avoid that Holiday Stress



The holidays are just ahead. This year, don't take responsibility for everyone else's happiness. Share the responsibilities of activities and even the chores associated with meals, guests and decorating. If other people fail to carry out their part, let them figure it out, don't rescue. Plan ahead to do just your part and see how things go. If something doesn't get done, so be it. We each have limited amounts of time and energy to devote so get in touch with your limits and don't exceed them. Planning ahead can make all the difference. If you need additional help with the holidays, contact the EAP.

Alcoholism: The Lost Diagnosis?

The American Medical Association (AMA) studied 250 insurance plans and discovered that less than one percent of alcoholics are diagnosed with alcohol use disorders by health care providers. The rate should be four to five times higher. Although approximately 8 percent of working adults suffer from alcohol dependence, only .06 percent of all plan members (less than 10 percent of those with the disease) receive such a diagnosis. In contrast, 40 percent of depressed patients, 65 percent of diabetics, and 70 percent of patients with hypertension are identified. Ironically, alcoholism often contributes directly to these medical conditions, but is still not treated on par with them.



Source: AMA, Science News Department, 7-21-2005.

Coping with Organizational Change



If you face dramatic organizational change this year, you can better manage the shock by understanding a bit of human psychology on your journey to the new status quo. Many change experts observe that employees—comfortable with the routines and relationships they have depended upon for years—experience letting go and acceptance of a new status quo in stages similar to the death of a loved one. 1) This “grief response” begins with denial. (“I don’t believe this!”) Sudden change is a shock to your system, and learning of it causes disbelief. 2) The second stage is anger. (“How can they do this to me?!”) You may not own your job, but you own a routine. When that changes, anger may be the result. 3) Depression. (“Things will never be the same again.”) Feeling helpless in the face of loss is what you have been trying to avoid in #1 and #2 above. But now that you are there, turning the corner to a brighter future is possible. 4) Taking the steps necessary to feel good again. (“Okay, so what happens now?”) Human beings are strong and adaptable. We want to feel good about the future. 5) Acceptance. (“Okay, let’s roll!”) Feeling excited about change does not come easy or overnight. However, taking the steps to get involved is the only way to feeling better about change. Congratulations, you are on your way to opportunities.

Ask, “What” not “Why”



Although everyone experiences stress, the natural response to sudden and unexpected stressful events is often frustration and a belief that these things could be avoided if only we knew how. Some stress we can’t control well, such as our response to natural disasters or rising gas prices, but the reality is that most stress is caused by our negative thoughts in response to situations and events. The good news is that we can control the way we think. To intervene quicker and experience less stress, ask yourself, “What can I do to manage this situation?” Ask this question sooner, and use it as a key health management strategy. This strategy takes you out of the victim role that emphasizes helplessness—the most stressful feeling of all.

What Video Violence Reveals

Youths exposed to violent video games suffer from increases in aggressive thoughts, aggressive behavior, and angry feelings, according to the American



Psychological Association. APA research reveals that violent games may also reduce a child’s helpful behavior and ability to be empathetic. Showing violent acts without consequences teaches youths that violence is an effective means of resolving conflict. Whereas, seeing pain and suffering as a consequence can inhibit aggressive behavior. Beyond limiting exposure to violence, children should be taught media literacy—or critical ways of viewing television and video games to reduce harm associated with violent entertainment. Teaching media literacy may help children understand what happens when someone gets injured on television or in a video game, versus real life.

Dealing with Interruptions



If you are weary of battling interruptions at work, try these interruption “interrupters”: 1) Tell coworkers that you are having difficulty with interruptions, and that you need some time to complete what you are doing. Set a time for them to return. 2) For employees who knock on your door and ask, “Got a minute?” use your calendar to schedule an appointment if it is not urgent. If it is urgent, remain standing during the conversation. This should send a signal that the conversation will be brief. 3) Comfortable couches and chairs invite visitors. They’re nice, but if you are desperate, removing them, making them unavailable, or replacing them with less comfortable furniture can work. 4) Close your office door to discourage visitors. 5) Be honest. Interruptions are first cousins of procrastination, so be honest about interruptions and your use of them to avoid work.